OVERVIEW
Lawmakers often craft public policies to address perceived problems. Determining whether policies or other types of social inventions truly work (i.e., cause the intended effects) entails program evaluation and related forms of policy analysis. This applied research seminar focuses on designing and conducting empirical programmatic evaluations with an emphasis on research design principles that make documenting cause and effect relationships more successful.

WINTER 2024 TOPICAL FOCUS
In most years, the course will have a topical focus depending upon world events and student interests. In Winter 2024, the focus will be on (1) civic engagement programs and voter mobilization efforts as well as (2) the effects of election administration and redistricting rules. In addition, we will also consider the potential (3) policy feedback effects related to clean energy policies, particularly interventions that inspire climate change mitigation behaviors. However, students may concentrate on topics beyond those listed above in the course. Finally, while the issue focus might vary each year, students may not repeat this course for credit.

COURSE RATIONALES & BACKGROUND
Social scientific research entails formulating and documenting relationships. Symbolically, the endeavor can be depicted as trying to show that some variable of interest, typically labelled “X,” affects some outcome, often called “Y.”

\[ X \rightarrow Y \]

In the diagram above, the arrow denotes causality. It suggests that X causes Y. Here the relationship is vastly simplified (e.g., there are often many more arrows and other possible influences on Y beyond X). However, this general principle and the degree to which X truly affects Y in a particular study embodies what is often called internal validity. Whether the X’s and Y’s actually represent the components of the underlying theoretical relationship is sometimes called construct validity. Whether the correlation between X and Y is assessed properly has been termed statistical conclusion validity. Finally, the extent to which the pattern holds across different units, settings, treatments, and measurement choices constitutes what many label as external validity. This course covers these and related notions of validity, but causal inference (internal validity) will occupy most of our attention. Individually or in groups, course participants will try to design and implement rigorous policy research evaluations.
OBJECTIVES
Learning objectives include:

- applying social science theories and analytical techniques to evaluate public policies, programs, and social interventions;
- understanding and synthesizing scholarly research;
- stating and testing hypotheses;
- Understanding the challenges of establishing causality;
- Gaining an appreciation for counterfactual inference;
- Critiquing and improving upon existing scholarship; and
- Conducting original research studies.

TEXTBOOKS


*Recommended

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Short Papers (30%) In this course, you will be asked to explore some specific policy or social intervention, outline a research design, and then either 1) execute the analysis (if possible), or 2) design prospective studies that could help address the main research questions. Three (n=3) short papers help set the stage for the course project, with a target length of 2-3 pages (750-word limit) each, not including references. Each subsequent paper can be (A) a continuation of the earlier paper (e.g., adding theory, design, data, and analytical improvements) or (B) new, much like earlier papers, but on a different topic. In some instances, it may be possible to work collaboratively in groups with advanced permission from the instructor, but please be aware that expectations regarding quality of the final paper will increase with the number of coauthors.

Final Paper (40%) The final paper can be (A) a substantial elaboration of the short papers (e.g., theory, design, data, and analytical improvements) or (B) a new paper on a different topic with the same core elements. Expectations for
the final paper will be explained in more detail toward the end of the term, but the target length of the project is 15-20 pages, not including appendices, survey instruments, computer code, etc. In some instances, it may be possible to work collaboratively with advanced permission from the instructor, but please be aware that expectations regarding quality of the final paper will increase with the number of coauthors.

**Participation (30%)** Participation is vital in a small seminar and includes three main components. The first concerns active engagement with an emphasis on quality of comments, not just quantity. In that sense, participation includes positive contributions toward the classroom learning environment, demeanor, and decorum. It probably goes without saying, but attendance is an important component of participation, and it goes beyond arriving in class on time, although punctuality is important. The second part of class involves presenting your ideas in class, particularly with connections to the readings and topics of discussion. The third component of participation entails producing two supplemental reading reports. These are 1-2 page reading reports from a list of possible readings listed as recommended on the syllabus or on readings lists approved by the course instructor (i.e., turn in one of these summaries on Canvas along with the second and third short papers; be prepared to discuss your reading in class during any subsequent week). These reading reports are graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis; multiple submissions beyond two are permitted to bolster participation grades. These reports can be used as part of the final paper literature review. To reinforce participation, there might be short quizzes on class readings, guest lecture presentations, or on prerecorded (asynchronous) lectures to view outside of class during the course. Quizzes would cover high-level concepts, not arcane details.

In general, grades follow the logic of the rubric on the Registrar’s website with respect to the meaning of letter grades. Numerically, grades will follow the system below until further notice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>96 to 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>91 to 95.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86 to 90.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>81 to 85.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>76 to 80.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>71 to 75.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>66 to 70.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>61 to 65.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>56 to 60.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>55.99 and below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOFTWARE & SKILLS** This course gives students opportunities to use empirical skills from other social science methodology courses (e.g., GOVT 10, SOC 10, ECON 10, PBPL 10, QSS 15) as well as advanced
quantitative analysis courses (e.g., experiments, econometrics, statistics, data visualization). However, because students may have had a range of different experiences, there will be some flexibility in terms of how these skills are employed. When appropriate, students may use statistical software programs such as Stata or R to conduct data analyses, but it may also be possible to use web-based applications to analyze datasets of interest. As needed, class sessions will be devoted to analytical techniques and software.

**ACADEMIC HONOR PRINCIPLES & ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**
Academic integrity is important. Please review and abide by the academic honor principles at Dartmouth ([https://policies.dartmouth.edu/policy/academic-honor-principle-1](https://policies.dartmouth.edu/policy/academic-honor-principle-1)).

The use of generative artificial intelligence, also known as GAI (e.g., ChatGPT, Bard, Bing), is not permitted unless approved by the instructor.

Please also use proper citation and be clear about responsibility in shared work situations. In this class, you will be writing original essays and papers, which means you should be aware of the proper citation practices. Ignorance about what constitutes plagiarism will not excuse a violation. Please make use of available campus resources to educate yourself on the proper use of outside sources. If you are confused about how to attribute sources, please speak with the instructor or make use of the Writing Center at Dartmouth.

We will use the citation system developed by the American Political Science Association for all textual and lists of works cited. It may be found here: [https://connect.apsanet.org/stylemanual/](https://connect.apsanet.org/stylemanual/)

For other information on proper citation practices, see [https://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/learning/materials/sources-and-citations-dartmouth](https://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/learning/materials/sources-and-citations-dartmouth).

**CONTACTING THE PROFESSOR, COURSE SCHEDULE, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**
Please schedule appointments to meet with me during my office hours via calendly.com or contact me via email. Office hours are most effective if you have spent time with the readings and given some thought to your specific question. Additionally, I often stay after class for a few minutes to clarify points and answer questions (e.g., in a group setting). Please note that if you email me with a question, generally I do not respond to email after 4 PM during the week and in most cases not during the weekend.

A Dartmouth term may seem like a long time, but it is difficult to get into depth as well as breadth. Accordingly, the course emphasizes some topics at the expense of others. However, the instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus at any point depending upon world circumstances, events, and student interests; *any changes will be announced to the class*. 
WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION

January 3, 2024 (Wednesday) – Introduction to the Course, Students, and Research Interests
We will meet each other, review the course syllabus, and discuss research interests/skills/backgrounds, etc. Students are encouraged to (briefly) present existing research projects that could be developed in this class as well to identify potential group collaborations.

- GT, Running Randomized Evaluations, Chapters 1-3.
- BdMF, Thinking Clearly with Data, Chapters 1-4 and Chapter 9; Skim Chapters 5-8.

Recommended:
- BCH, Research Design in the Social Sciences, Chapters 1-4.

WEEK 2 – EXAMPLES AND APPLICATIONS

January 8, 2024 (Monday) – Examples: Voter Mobilization & Vote Choice Field Experiments


Recommended:

January 10, 2024 (Wednesday) – Examples: Deliberation, Informing, and Civic Engagement

Recommended:


**Short Paper 1 Due, January 12, 2024 at 5 PM EST on Canvas Course Website**

### WEEK 3 – RESEARCH DESIGN CONCEPTS

**January 15, 2024 (Monday): NO CLASS, MLK DAY (Read for Wednesday)**

**January 17, 2024 (Wednesday): Validity, Causality, and Counterfactuals**

- BdMF, Chapter 9 & 10

**January 22, 2024 (Monday): Data Sources & NH Primary Week**

- Cooperative Election Survey ("CES" formerly CCES) [https://cces.gov.harvard.edu/] & See CCES Codebooks on Canvas
- Roper Center (view tutorial): [https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/](https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/)
- Pew Research Center: [https://www.pewresearch.org/](https://www.pewresearch.org/)
  [Also see: Berkeley SDA Archive: [https://sda.berkeley.edu/archive.htm](https://sda.berkeley.edu/archive.htm)]
- Voter Data Files
  - New York: [https://www.elections.ny.gov/FoilRequests.html](https://www.elections.ny.gov/FoilRequests.html)

**January 17, 2024 (Wednesday): Validity, Causality, and Counterfactuals**


### WEEK 4 – DESIGNS I: DATA & EXPERIMENTS

**January 22, 2024 (Monday): Data Sources & NH Primary Week**

- Cooperative Election Survey ("CES" formerly CCES) [https://cces.gov.harvard.edu/] & See CCES Codebooks on Canvas
- Roper Center (view tutorial): [https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/](https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/)
- Pew Research Center: [https://www.pewresearch.org/](https://www.pewresearch.org/)
  [Also see: Berkeley SDA Archive: [https://sda.berkeley.edu/archive.htm](https://sda.berkeley.edu/archive.htm)]
- Voter Data Files
  - New York: [https://www.elections.ny.gov/FoilRequests.html](https://www.elections.ny.gov/FoilRequests.html)
L2: https://l2-data.com/


**Recommended:**

**January 24, 2024 (Wednesday): Experiments**

- BdMF, *Thinking Clearly with Data*, Chapter 11.

**Recommended:**

**WEEK 5 – DESIGNS II: STRONG DESIGNS WITH NON-EXPERIMENTAL DATA**

**January 29, 2024 (Monday): Regression Discontinuity Designs (RDD)**

• BdMF, *Thinking Clearly with Data*, Chapter 12.

Recommended:
• BCH, Research Design in the Social Sciences, Chapter 16.

**January 31, 2024 (Wednesday): Difference-in-Differences (DID)**

Recommended:

**WEEK 6 – WORKSHOP I**

Students will present their work in class sessions and receive feedback from the group.

**February 5 & 7, 2024 (Monday and Wednesday): Presentations**

*Short Paper 2 Due, February 9, 2024 at 5 PM EST on Canvas Course Website*

**WEEK 7: SPECIAL TOPICS -- MANIPULATION CHECKS AND STATISTICAL POWER**

**February 12, 2024 (Monday): Manipulation Checks**

*Guest Speaker (Schedule Permitting): Prof. Yamil Velez, Columbia University*
Recommended:


**February 14, 2024 (Wednesday): Statistical Power**


Recommended:


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**WEEK 8: SPECIAL TOPICS – MODERATION, MEDIATION, AND MATCHING**

**February 19, 2024 (Monday): Moderation vs. Mediation**

Recommended:

**February 21, 2024 (Wednesday): Matching & Reweighting**

Recommended:

**WEEK 9 – PROJECT WORKSHOP II**

Students will present their work in class sessions and receive feedback from the group.

**February 26 & 28, 2024 (Monday and Wednesday): Presentations**

Short Paper 3 Due, March 1, 2024 at 5 PM EST on Canvas Course Website

**WEEK 10 – FINAL PAPER PROJECT WEEK**

**March 4, 2024 (Monday): Group & Individual Advising**

Final Paper Due, March 11, 2024 at 5 PM EST on Canvas Course Website
REQUIRED & RECOMMENDED STATEMENTS FROM DARTMOUTH COLLEGE
AND OTHER CLASS POLICIES
(SEE COURSE CANVAS SITE OR DARTMOUTH COLLEGE WEBSITES FOR MORE DETAILS)

COVID-19 AND RELATED PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Attendance:
You are expected to attend class in person unless you have made alternative arrangements due to illness, medical reasons, or the need to isolate due to COVID-19. For the health and safety of our class community, please: do not attend class when you are sick, nor when you have been instructed by Student Health Services to stay home. For the latest on COVID requirements and recommendations offered by Dartmouth, please go to: https://covid.dartmouth.edu/

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Students requesting disability-related accommodations and services for this course are required to register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS; Apply for Services webpage; student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu; 1-603-646-9900) and to request that an accommodation email be sent to me in advance of the need for an accommodation. Then, students should schedule a follow-up meeting with me to determine relevant details such as what role SAS or its Testing Center may play in accommodation implementation. This process works best for everyone when completed as early in the quarter as possible. If students have questions about whether they are eligible for accommodations or have concerns about the implementation of their accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

CONSENT TO RECORD (IF MEETING VIRTUALLY)

(1) Consent to recording of course meetings and office hours that are open to multiple students.

By enrolling in this course,

a) I affirm my understanding that the instructor may record meetings of this course and any associated meetings open to multiple students and the instructor, including but not limited to scheduled and ad hoc office hours and other consultations, within any digital platform, including those used to offer remote instruction for this course.

b) I further affirm that the instructor owns the copyright to their instructional materials, of which these recordings constitute a part, and my distribution of any of these recordings in whole or in part to any person or entity other than other members of the class without prior written consent of the instructor may be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including separation from Dartmouth.
(2) Requirement of consent to one-on-one recordings
By enrolling in this course, I hereby affirm that I will not make a recording in any medium of any one-on-one meeting with the instructor or another member of the class or group of members of the class without obtaining the prior written consent of all those participating, and I understand that if I violate this prohibition, I will be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including separation from Dartmouth, as well as any other civil or criminal penalties under applicable law. I understand that an exception to this consent applies to accommodations approved by SAS for a student's disability, and that one or more students in a class may record class lectures, discussions, lab sessions, and review sessions and take pictures of essential information, and/or be provided class notes for personal study use only.

If you have questions, please contact the Office of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official college records, please let me know. As a participant in course discussions, you should also honor the identities and diversity of your classmates.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

Dartmouth has a deep commitment to support students’ religious observances and diverse faith practices. Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me as soon as possible—before the end of the second week of the term at the latest—to discuss appropriate course adjustments.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The academic environment is challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including: the Counseling Center which allows you to book triage appointments online, the Student Wellness Center which offers wellness check-ins, and your undergraduate dean. The student-led Dartmouth Student Mental Health Union and their peer support program may be helpful if you would like to speak to a trained fellow student support listener. If you need immediate assistance, please contact the counselor on-call at (603) 646-9442 at any time. Please make me aware of anything that will hinder your success in this course.

TITLE IX
At Dartmouth, we value integrity, responsibility, and respect for the rights and interests of others, all central to our Principles of Community. We are dedicated to establishing and maintaining a safe and inclusive campus where all community members have equal access to Dartmouth's educational and employment opportunities. We strive to promote an environment of sexual respect, safety, and well-being. Through the Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct Policy (SMP), Dartmouth demonstrates that sex and gender-based discrimination, sex and gender-based harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, etc., are not tolerated in our community.

For more information regarding Title IX and to access helpful resources, visit Title IX's website (sexual-respect.dartmouth.edu). As a faculty member, I am required to share disclosures of sexual or gender-based misconduct with the Title IX office.

If you have any questions or want to explore support and assistance, please contact the Title IX office at 603-646-0922 or TitleIX@dartmouth.edu. Speaking to Title IX does not automatically initiate a college resolution. Instead, much of their work is around providing supportive measures to ensure you can continue to engage in Dartmouth's programs and activities. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dartmouth's Title IX Coordinator or the Deputy Title IX Coordinator for the Guarini School. Their contact information can be found on the sexual respect website at: https://sexual-respect.dartmouth.edu.